

## The Locked Gym

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The world around me seemed to warp and bend as I found myself standing naked in the cold, unfamiliar gymnasium. Panic surged through me as I realized I was trapped. I wasn't alone. Alex, the charismatic leader of our class, stood nearby, his eyes wide with disbelief. Riley, the ever-compassionate one, was already offering a comforting hand, though she probably needed it as much as me. The once-familiar gym was now a strange and unfamiliar place. The lights were out, casting eerie shadows on the polished floor. The air was thick with tension, and the only sound was the distant murmur of my classmates.

We quickly formed a group, using whatever we could find to cover ourselves. Backpacks, gym mats, even our own hands became makeshift clothing. Alex, ever the strategist, took charge, delegating tasks and keeping everyone calm. Olivia, my closest friend since preschool, offered a wry smile. "Well Jack, looks like we're playing dress-up with gym equipment," she said, her voice surprisingly steady.

But our attempts at makeshift clothing were futile. Eventually, we gave up on that because whatever we used as clothes disappeared before our eyes. It was like the gym itself rejected our attempts at normalcy. Frustration turned to a nervous energy that fueled our need to explore and understand our situation. As someone who usually struggles with remembering his locker combination, this whole situation felt like a bizarre fever dream.

We explored the gym, discovering strange and inexplicable phenomena. The most bizarre occurrence was the sudden appearance of Goombas, those evil mushroom things from Mario.

We established a routine, dividing tasks among ourselves and creating a sense of normalcy within the chaos. One of the first things we did was to find a suitable place to sleep. Ben, the class brainiac, discovered a small, secluded section of the locker room that was relatively free from drafts. We used gym mats, and even each other's bodies for warmth to create a makeshift sleeping area. We found it best to sleep in a heap. I let Olivia use my back as a pillow. Some of the other kids did things that I choose not to write about here.

Despite the cramped conditions, we managed to get some rest, taking turns to keep watch and ensuring everyone's safety. The shared experience of sleeping in such close proximity brought us closer together and strengthened our bonds.

Over the days we spent trapped in the gym, we faced numerous challenges, including finding food and water, staying warm, and defending ourselves against the Goombas. We worked together to overcome these obstacles, demonstrating the power of human connection and resilience.

Ethan, the star athlete, proved invaluable in the Goomba encounters, using his agility and improvised weapons to great effect. Maya, the quiet observer, noticed patterns in the Goomba attacks, helping us develop strategies. Chloe, with her unwavering optimism, kept everyone's spirits high with her jokes and stories.

We learned to appreciate the simple things in life, like the warmth of a friend's presence or the comfort of a shared story. We found joy in the small victories, such as successfully defeating a Goomba or discovering a hidden stash of snacks.

It wasn't all hardcore survival though. The gym teacher had a Gameboy and a Wii in his office, so when we weren't battling Goombas in real life, Mario would take on the role on the Wii. We also used some of the gym equipment to play and keep ourselves fit. Interestingly, a lot of the girls who did gymnastics found they were much more flexible without having to be clothed. Maybe it was the strange energy in the gym, or maybe it was just the freedom of movement, but

they could bend and contort in ways they never could before.

One day, while exploring a forgotten corner of the gym, we stumbled upon a hidden closet. As we opened the door, a wave of strange energy washed over us. Inside, the air was thick with a peculiar scent, and the walls seemed to shimmer with an otherworldly glow.

Intrigued, we ventured inside. To our surprise, we discovered that any lie spoken within the closet would become reality. A student, known as Frognilo, overcome with joy, exclaimed, "I wish I were a monkey!" To our horror, the student instantly transformed into a small, furry marmoset.

We quickly realized the danger of speaking lies within the closet. From that point on, we were extremely cautious about our words, ensuring that everything we said was true and honest.

As the days turned into weeks, the lack of proper hygiene became a growing concern. We discovered that the only working shower was in the boys' locker room, not far from where we had been sleeping.

To conserve water and time, we decided to take showers in groups of five. It was a strange and uncomfortable experience, but it was necessary to maintain our health and sanity. I chose to shower with Olivia, Alex, Riley and what was left of Frognilo (who was still a monkey). We laughed nervously as we climbed into the shower together, the water cascading down our bodies. It shouldn't have been that big of a deal, I mean, we were already naked, but yet it still felt strange

One day, the gym doors burst open, revealing the glassy darkness beyond. We rushed through it, eager to return to the outside world. As we stepped back into the familiar hallways of the school, fully clothed, we realized that only a few seconds had passed in the outside world. Frognilo, who had been transformed into a small, furry primate, returned to his normal human form, much to our relief and astonishment.

I still can't believe what happened. It feels like a dream, but it's not. We were really trapped in that gym for what seemed like weeks. It was the most terrifying and exhilarating experience of my life. I'm so grateful for my friends and the way we came together to survive. I'll never forget this.

The locked gym incident was a surreal and unforgettable experience that tested our limits and revealed our true character. It was a reminder of the fragility of life, the importance of human connection, and the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity.

A few weeks later, whispers began circulating about a group of students planning a "Freedom of Movement" rally. Whether it was a serious attempt to promote freedom of clothing or just a way to blow off steam, one thing was certain - the locked gym incident had sparked a conversation about social norms and self-expression in Derry Middle School.

And now, the Derry, Me. nudist population has doubled. As for me, I can't help but think about that time in the gym. Would I go back if I had the chance? Part of me shudders at the thought, but another part...another part can't help but feel a strange sense of longing.